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ABSTRACT

This publication attempts to simplify the complex issue of declining enrollment and surplus school space. Part 1 is devoted to a thorough discussion of enrollment decline. Text and tables are used to explain enrollment projections, large city public school enrollment decline, birthrates, population mobility, expenditures for education, and the number of defeated school bond elections. Expectations and assumptions about schools and how these will be affected by societal changes are discussed. Part 2 discusses some of the factors inhibiting new uses for school facilities and offers suggestions for using school space that do not conflict, or conflict very little, with the current definition of "normal" education. This is followed by exploring alternative definitions of "normal" education and using facilities for alternative forms of schooling, retraining people for mid-life career changes, lifelong learning centers, and industrial training programs. Six sketches illustrate the proposed conversion of Niles East High School in Skokie, Illinois, to create 125 apartments, a community art center, and a community recreation center. (Author/MLF)

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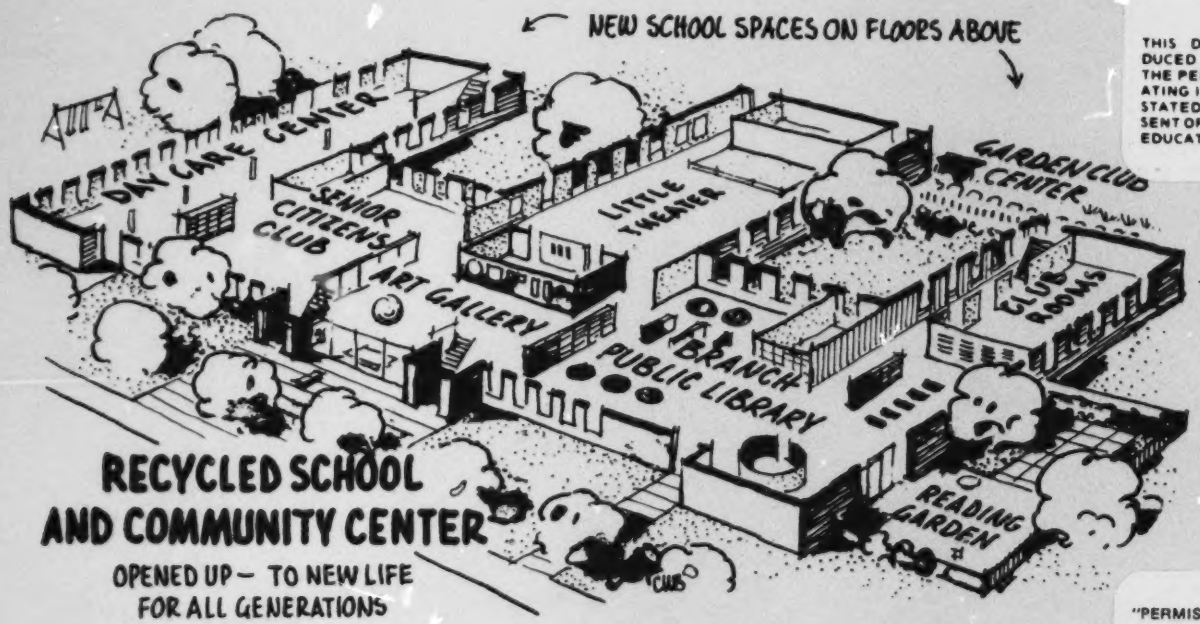
SURPLUS SCHOOL SPACE—
THE PROBLEM AND THE POSSIBILITIES



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SURPLUS SCHOOL SPACE—THE PROBLEM AND THE POSSIBILITIES

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PREFACE

The phenomenon of declining enrollment and surplus school space is a complex issue, with varied origins and far-reaching implications. It is the intent of this publication to simplify these complexities wherever possible in the belief that a total understanding of the problem is essential in order to effectively deal with it. Hence, Part I is devoted to a thorough discussion of *enrollment decline*, based on the assumption that decline is the most significant factor contributing to the problem of surplus space. *Attitudes* are also explored—as both effectors and inhibitors of change. In a more practical vein, alternative *uses* for surplus school space are offered, incorporating suggestions for today, with an eye to the future.

A phenomenon which parallels that of enrollment decline is the growth of Community Education. Community Education had its inception in the early 1930's, primarily because of the leadership and financial assistance of Charles Stewart Mott, a philanthropist from the automobile industry. Today, the foundation established in his name is still intricately involved in Community Education; their assistance made this publication possible.

Community Education as a philosophical concept is a process whereby community residents, agencies, and schools work in cooperation with one another to identify needs and develop solutions to those needs. The programmatic aspects of Community Education will vary from community to community depending on the needs which are identified.

Community involvement is the key to the success of Community Education. This involvement process is frequently found in participation in community advisory councils and participation in programs which are established. These areas are mentioned for two purposes. First, community advisory councils could be a very effective method of including citizens in the planning process for utilization of surplus school space. Secondly, Community Education programs have grown dramatically and the services offered by Community Education, often in cooperation with other agencies, may be viable alternatives for using surplus school space. Research has demonstrated that Community Education, as a community involvement process, has had a positive impact on many communities; recent state and federal legislation is further enhancing the development of this concept. The future is indeed ripe for Community Education.

This publication is not intended as an implementation guidebook on solving the problems of surplus school space or on beginning a Community Education program. Rather it is an *awareness* tool, focusing on "how we got to this point and where we go from here." For community educators, administrators, facility planners, citizens—for anyone faced with a situation of excess school space—it is hoped this tool will both clarify the issue and open the reader to new possibilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was undertaken by the Council of Educational Facility Planners in an effort to help its members and others faced with excess school space.

Partial funding for the study was provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which, through its support of community education, works to strengthen the relationship among schools, other institutions and citizens. We are grateful to the Foundation for its generous support and many referrals in the field.

The organization and portions of the content of this manuscript were suggested by members of our Project Advisory Council in the course of an exciting and thought-provoking two-day conference. We are indebted to them for their contributions and hope that we have done justice to their insights. They are:

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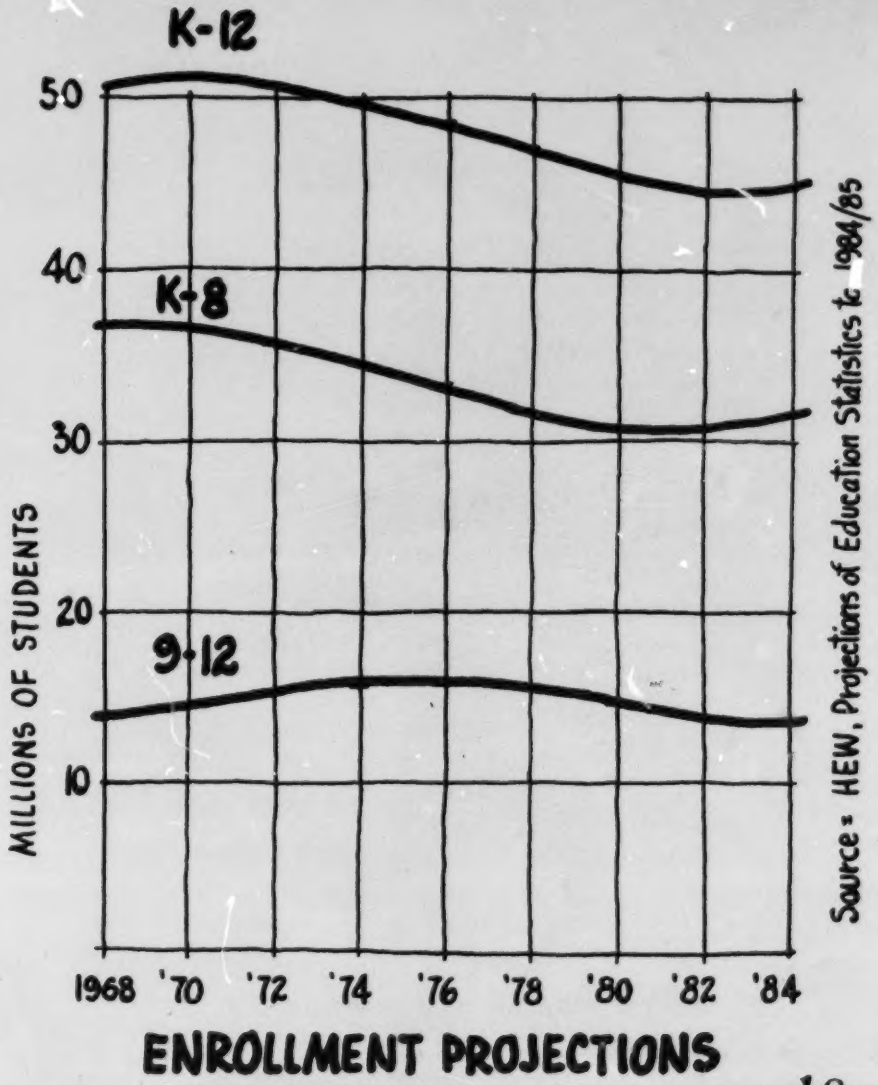
I. THE PROBLEM — DECLINE AND ITS CAUSES

STATISTICS

Declining Enrollments

The United States Office of Education predicts that schools in the U.S. will face a 12% drop in enrollment between 1972 and 1982. The average for school enrollment in all grades peaked in 1970 at 51.3 million students. Elementary school enrollment has been declining since the 1969 figure of 36.79 million and is expected to continue declining; 1980 projections indicate an approximate 30.9 million students will be enrolled in elementary schools. (It should be noted, too, that national enrollment predictions now indicate the possibility of increased K-8 enrollments after about 1983.)

Although delayed, the effect is the same for secondary school enrollments (grades 9-12). Having peaked in 1976 with 15.6 million students, secondary school enrollments are expected to diminish to 12 million in 1989. The picture for both elementary and secondary school enrollment shows 51.3 million students in 1970, 49.8 million in 1974, and 44.8 million in 1984. Thus, during the fourteen year period from 1970 to 1984, we may witness a 12.7% enrollment drop.



SCHOOL SYSTEM	ENROLLMENT DECLINE (IN 000's)	PERCENTAGE DECLINE
ST. LOUIS	29	24.7%
SAN FRANCISCO	23	24.5
ATLANTA	27	24.2
MINNEAPOLIS	16	23.2
DENVER	21	21.8
BUFFALO	15	21.1
PORTLAND	10	20.9
MEMPHIS	30	20.3
BOSTON	19	19.9
OAKLAND	13	19.3
CLEVELAND	29	18.5
LONG BEACH	13	17.8
PITTSBURGH	13	16.8
DETROIT	49	16.6
NASHVILLE	16	16.2
DALLAS	28	13.7
NEW ORLEANS	15	13.6
MILWAUKEE	17	12.6
WASHINGTON	18	12.2
BALTIMORE	22	11.2
TOLEDO	6	9.6
CHICAGO	52	9.0
PHILADELPHIA	21	7.3
LOS ANGELES	45	6.8
SAN DIEGO	8	5.8
NEW YORK CITY	37	3.2
DADE COUNTY	2	0.9%

Source - National Center for Educational Statistics

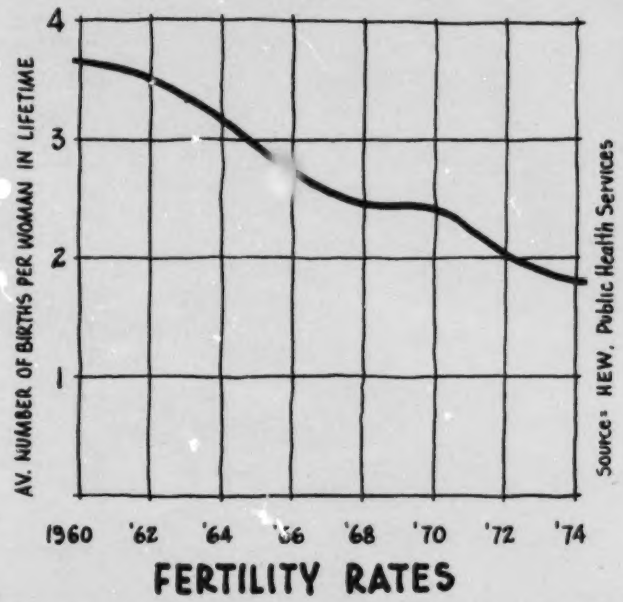
LARGE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DECLINE

FROM PEAK YEAR (1968, '69 OR '70) TO 1975

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics shows increases in enrollment in just twelve states between 1970 and 1975. Only a few school districts have escaped the decline phenomenon. Between the fall of 1971 and that of 1976, Jefferson County, Colorado school enrollment grew by 12.5%, Las Vegas by 10.7%, Tampa, Florida by 11.5%, and Fort Lauderdale by 12.6%. These growth situations are relatively rare and pale beside such losses (between 1968 and 1975) as a 20.3% drop in the Memphis schools, a 21.8% loss in Denver, a 24.7% drop in St. Louis, and a 19.9% loss in Boston.

Birthrates and Mobility

A dramatic drop in the birthrate is a primary cause of enrollment loss. In the 19th century the average family had seven children. In 1959 there were 3.7 children per family. Today the average family contains 1.8 children. The mid

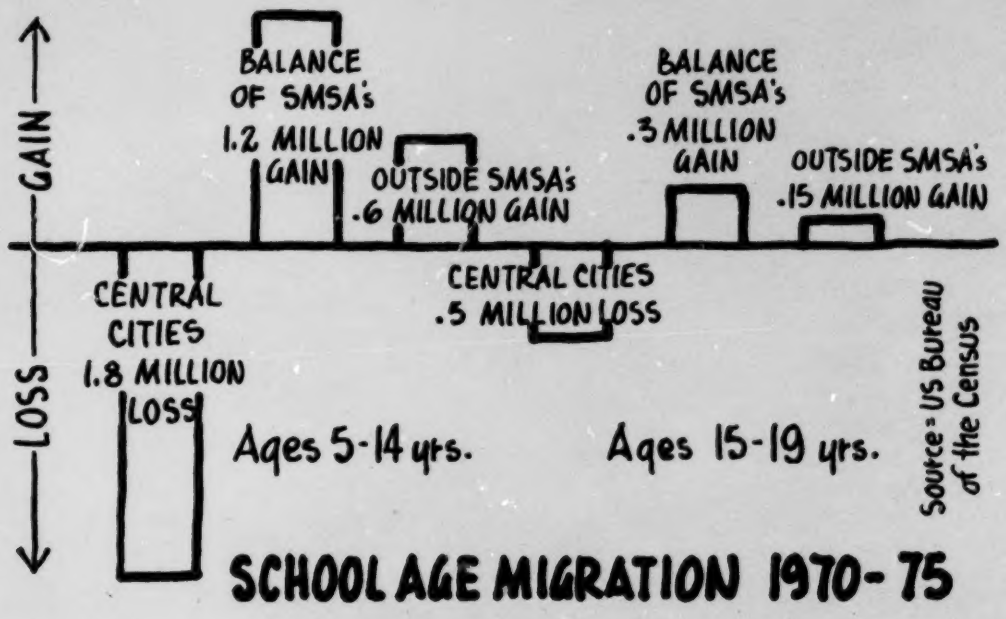


FERTILITY RATES

1970's baby boom predicted because of the large number of post-war baby boom women reaching maturity, never materialized. In 1971 there were 18 births per 1,000 population while in 1976 there were only 14.7. In 1960, 28% of the women between the ages of 20 and 24 were unmarried. By 1973, the figure had increased to 38%.

Mobility of the American people is a second cause of school enrollment shifts. The average family moves once every five years. Between 1970 and 1975, 60% of the people between the ages of 30 and 35 moved. Many of them may have been parents of elementary school age children. Before the 1970's, people moved to urban areas. During the current decade, the movement, especially by middle class Americans, has reversed and metropolitan areas have lost approximately seven million residents.

Concurrent with the urban-suburban-rural population shifts are migrations to the sunbelt, the nation's warmer southern and western climates. Since 1970, these areas have experienced 85% of our nation's growth, while the northeast and midwest have been losing population and industry. The predictability of enrollment change due to these factors is not as evasive as that caused by the change in birth and fertility rates. People move to desirable locations where there are employment opportunities, and to where they think the "quality of life" will be better.


GAIN
LOSS
BALANCE OF SMSA's 1.2 MILLION GAIN
OUTSIDE SMSA's .6 MILLION GAIN
BALANCE OF SMSA's .3 MILLION GAIN
OUTSIDE SMSA's .15 MILLION GAIN
CENTRAL CITIES 1.8 MILLION LOSS
CENTRAL CITIES .5 MILLION LOSS
Ages 5-14 yrs.
Ages 15-19 yrs.
Source: US Bureau of the Census

SCHOOL AGE MIGRATION 1970-75

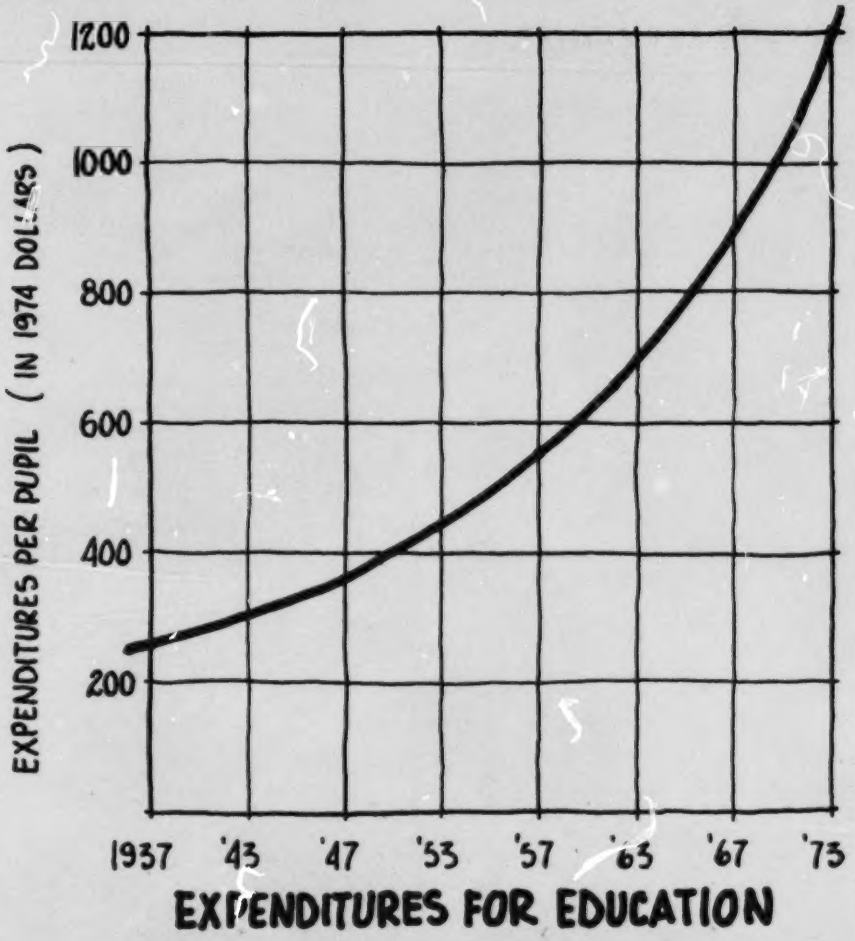
19

20

Higher Costs, Less Funding

According to figures cited by the National School Public Relations Association, the nation's schools served 200,000 fewer students in 1975-76 than they did during the preceding year and the cost was eleven billion dollars more. These figures are an annoyance to administrators and an enigma to citizens who reason that the costs of education should decline in proportion to the number of students served. One factor often overlooked is that decline doesn't come in neatly packaged groups of twenty-five students, but is distributed in smaller numbers throughout a school or district. The result is lower teacher-student ratios which inflate the cost of teaching each child.

Inflation is undoubtedly a major problem. Costs of schooling are rising along with other costs. Salaries, facility maintenance, and teaching materials are more expensive. Fuel costs (when fuel is available) have escalated wildly. The necessity for making school buildings energy conservative, a process that may require modification of the building shell and mechanical systems as well as more intelligent operation, involves unavoidable capital investment. It costs more to fill school bus gasoline tanks, and when neighborhood schools close because of enrollment decline, more students are bused farther. Teachers, with union backing, and administrators, are demanding and getting higher wages. The list goes on and on. Inflation has introduced seemingly insurmountable complications.

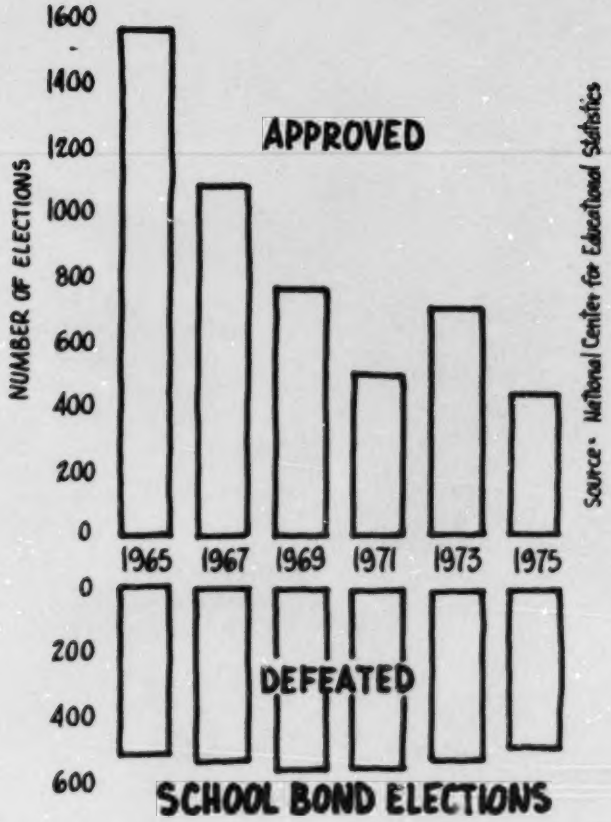


State Aid and Property Tax

Because state financial assistance is distributed on a per pupil basis, local school districts with enrollment decline face a loss in state aid. However, cuts in state aid are not felt with the same intensity everywhere for two reasons. First, state educational support varies from 100% in Hawaii to less than 10% in New Hampshire. Thus the dependence of local districts on outside assistance is unequal. Second, because property tax typically provides the bulk of local education support, withdrawal of state aid is relatively insignificant in rich districts. State aid is more important in poor districts. The wealthy can compensate for their loss with comparatively little trouble. The less privileged cannot.

Demands for reforms in school financing have been articulated with increasing force since the late 1960's. Perhaps the most important court action to encourage equality was the *Serrano vs. Priest* decision in 1971 (recently upheld, March 1977). *Serrano vs. Priest* advances the concept of "fiscal neutrality," making the wealth of the state, not that of the widely disparate local districts, the determinant of educational funding.

Some states have struggled with new formulae to establish a fixed foundation for equalizing school funding but none have achieved equity in taxation and



per pupil expenditure. The struggle for fiscal reform continues.

Opponents of property tax as the basic source for school financing argue that it is unfair for another reason: public education, despite efforts of community education supporters, is still a service utilized most by a limited clientele—children ages five to eighteen. Typically, one third of any given community has children who enjoy the benefits for which all property owners pay.

This situation has been justified in the

theory that the whole community is improved by the education of the individual. Not all who pay property taxes agree with this theory.

Bond Issues and Levies

The final factor in the fiscal distress of public schooling is the increasingly frequent defeat of bond issues and funding levies. In 1965, 74.7% of the school bonds requested were approved. In 1975, only 46.3% of the bond issues were passed. These figures indicate a reduced willingness to comply with requests from public school administrators. Whether this situation is the result of a loss of confidence in a system that promised more than it delivered or a reflection of pervasive slowed growth, support is clearly not as strong as it was a decade ago.

Private Schools

In addition to these problems, the public schools face another unpleasant prospect—withdrawal of some public support as more people look to private schools for the education of their children. Court-ordered busing, for desegration reasons, has probably intensified interest in private schools; also, large city school systems have a reputation (whether deserved or not) for lower quality education than they provided in the past, or than smaller city, suburban, and private schools presently provide.

REASONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Declines in school enrollment, the birthrate and financial support are symptomatic of major changes in social attitudes—changes which will eventually, inevitably, alter the role of education in our society. But before we can develop successful solutions to the problem of excess school space, we must first determine what expectations and assumptions about our schools we hold, and how these will be affected by societal changes.

Some Theory — The Role of Schools in Society

In the beginning of *The Dynamics of Educational Change: Toward Responsive Schools*, John Goodlad discusses the difference between education and schooling:

> From the time of the Greeks to the contemporary era, the most thoughtful statements of educational aims in the western world have been fundamentally alike. They have affirmed and reaffirmed the inquiring, self-understanding individual of wisdom and compassion living in harmony and justice with his fellow man — the good person in the good society. The words may change but the ideas remain essentially the same . . . The aims of education are long-term and stable . . . The goals of schooling are oriented to living generations, to the here and now.

Societies sponsor schools which, in turn, promote the values and preoccupations of the society, sometimes to the point of conflict with the broader aims of education. Societies will enlarge, alter or diminish the function of schooling, depending upon their needs. Schools are one of the institutions that make a society, in the same sense that building blocks make a structure. In this case, neither the structure nor its parts are static; as one changes, the others are shifted and realigned.

Some History — Schools in America

A look at our own history illustrates the point. In pre-industrial America, schooling was a refinement most often available to the wealthy and influential, and, as such, it helped to underscore social stratification. But family, wealth and connections, more so than education, determined an individual's place in society.

The industrial revolution brought a radical shift in the function of schooling. It created enormous numbers of new jobs that required specialized training. Schools geared up to provide this non-exclusive industrial system with technically and managerially skilled workers. In return, industries came to depend on the schools for a trained workforce.

Education during this period was termed "the great equalizer." Schools were turning out workers whose family background had increasingly less to do with their social roles. At the same time, schools were the chief agents of socialization for a diverse, largely immigrant population.

Today, schools find themselves increasingly responsible for meeting the expectations of not one, but many publics, who sometimes want them to take over functions previously performed by the community or the family unit. Thus, schools today are viewed as largely responsible for racial, social and economic integration, for creating a sense of community, and for helping the individual toward self-fulfillment.

As our schools assume these new roles, space is required to accommodate the new functions. Therefore, some of what would otherwise be "surplus space" is re-used for entirely different purposes. New programs, to a certain extent, balance declining enrollment, as services to the community are broadened.

Changing Attitudes and Effects on Education

Conflicting expectations about schooling reflect our changing attitudes toward education, our society and our world. Some of these attitudes have special bearing on the future role of schools.

Family size and makeup

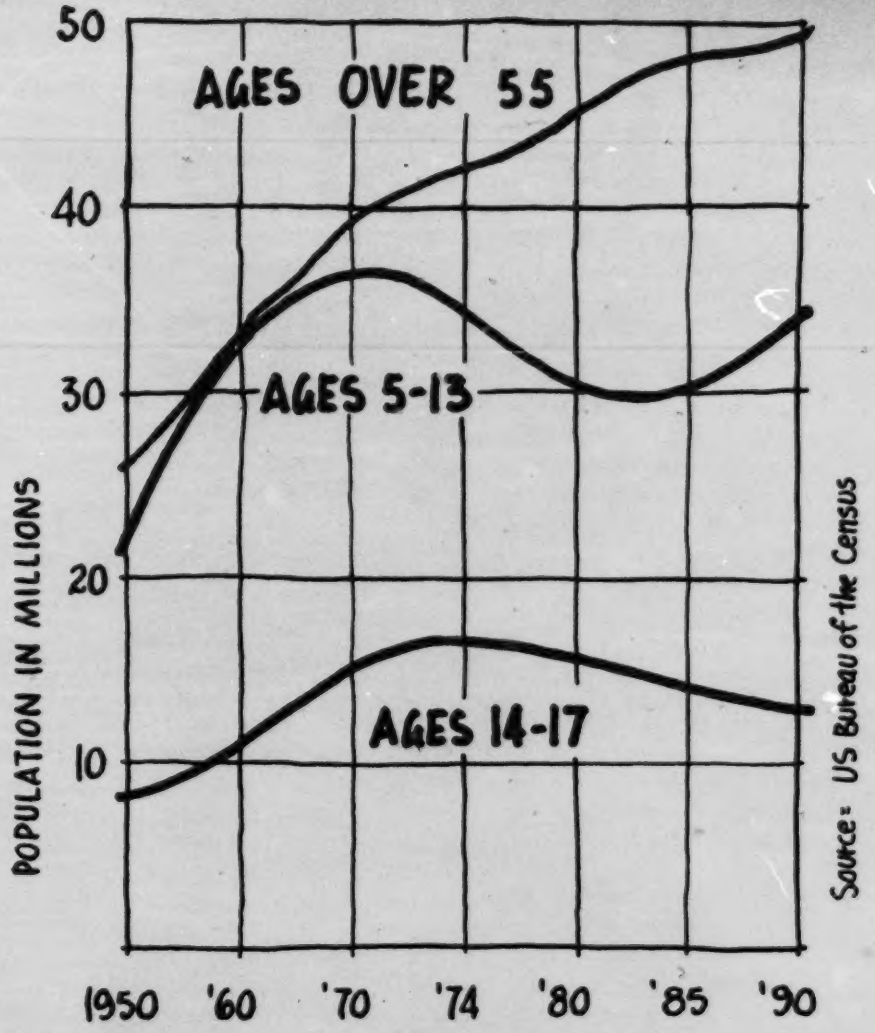
The decline in America's school age population is the product of changes that have occurred over the past 25 years in attitudes toward the family. Previously, a large family was an economic advantage. Now, economics is a major deterrent to producing large numbers of children. To this can be added the publicity given overpopulation, the availability of effective contraceptives, and factors specific to women such as the growth of career opportunities, college attendance and the postponement and/or rejection of childbearing.

The acceptance of divorce has altered family makeup. Current estimates are that approximately forty percent of all marriages end in divorce. Divorced people are capable of moving on to another marriage and a second family, creating different family units than have been known before. Single parent family units have sharply increased, and it is not uncommon to find such groups sharing homes and expenses. Factors such as the above have combined to create a different set of needs for schools to meet.

Longevity

America is growing older as a nation, and its people are living longer. Most predictions are that our population will stabilize by the year 2025, at between 260-270 million people. There will be twice as many people over 65 in 2020 as there are today; only 1 person in 3 will be a taxpayer. The shift from a young to an aged-dependent population will be accompanied by a de-emphasis on youth-oriented activities and an emergence of the slower-paced lifestyle of the old. Small homes, apartments and condominiums within cities will be in greater demand, as will public transportation and accessible cultural activities. New strains will be exerted on medicare, social security and pension funds.

The new lifestyle, giving people large quantities of leisure time to pursue self-fulfilling activities, may create a new arena for education. Desirable skills may be less formal and more creative. Also, education could be a means for the older population to assume more productive roles in society.



POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES

Pluralism

If we concede that humans have basic needs for security and membership within a group, then we can understand the void that ethnicity is rapidly filling. Practices aimed at the denial of unique ethnic sub-cultures, heritages, folklores and family social patterns are being challenged, as the increasing number of school programs designed to promote ethnic and racial identity illustrate. Schools must encourage a new emphasis on social policies aimed at equalizing options and opportunities for all members of the community they serve.

Defining Community

A community may be broadly defined as a living network of communication and interaction among people. Political or school district borders do not necessarily contain a community. Some feel that our first community is the planet "Spaceship Earth," and that all of mankind is our concern. Others identify their community by a sub-division boundary. Still others define communities by function (sports, intellectual and artistic communities are examples). How should the schools define and delineate their role in the community? Is it their responsibility to facilitate security, sameness, familiarity and identity? Or should the schools expand students' concepts to include a larger view of mankind, and become a vehicle for the acceptance of differences? Achieving a balance between these responsibilities is not an easy task.

Environment

Optimism has been a dominant American characteristic, the product of the abundance of our natural resources. Abundance and optimism fed the belief that growth is progress and led us to rely upon a complex, energy-consuming technology for solutions to our problems. Only recently have dwindling natural resources and spreading environmental pollution caused us to recognize our short-sightedness. Many feel that it is time to develop new criteria for evaluating the quality of our lives.

Employment

According to Willis Harman, "The only legitimated roles in an industrialized society tend to be having a job, being married to someone who has a job, and being a student preparing to hold a job. There are not enough of those legitimated social roles to go around and this is bound to be even more true in the future . . . the 'new scarcity' puts new constraints on the extent to which new technologies will create new jobs." An increasing shortage of work roles may well alter the future role of our schools.

School Control

The rise of the professional rather than the community as the policy/decision-maker occurred between 1910 and 1930. Over the years, educators came to view education as a science rather than an art. Quasi-scientific theories took on auras of absolute authority, often conflicting with traditional family concepts and practices. As centralized districts took in larger and larger areas, schools relied increasingly on industry as their model for management techniques. In pursuit of scientific exactness and efficiency, administrators and school boards have often failed to heed the opinions of the general citizenry and certainly of the students. In its charge to the Commission of Education Governance, the National Committee of Citizens in Education states that, "Now more than ever, there exists no mechanism for public concerns to be expressed in any systematic, meaningful, and productive way on the issue of educational change." The major form of public protest against the schools' failure to consider differing interpretations of the purpose of education has been negative votes on school requests for bonds and operating levies. Control of the dollar is the most effective voice the citizenry has in most communities, while recourse to the courts is the single vehicle for altering decisions made by school systems.

A Word About Leadership

Who is assisting local districts to cope with decline-related problems? Not most state education agencies, as the results of an informal survey undertaken for this project showed. State agencies were asked to describe the kinds of financial aid and leadership they were offering local districts faced with declining enrollments—most acknowledged they have offered no assistance to local districts.

Some state agencies, though, have prepared reports on declining enrollments. The Illinois report was the first and most thorough, followed by those of New York, Washington and Michigan—all northern, urban, industrial states hard hit by urban blight and the skyrocketing costs of resources. [On the local level, Minneapolis has done an excellent study that includes plans of model districts and information on how they coped with decline. They were assisted by Minnesota legislation requiring all state agencies to use data collected by the state demographer's office. This action is an effort to prevent the infighting that results when separate departments generate data independently, and is certain to help school districts and others coordinate their planning efforts.]

It was surprising not to find more evidence of state assistance to local school boards. State education agencies have the resources to make population projections and the contacts in state legislatures to develop financing formulas to compensate local districts suffering a loss in state aid due to decline. Cooperation and coordination of effort at all levels within the state are certainly a necessity if local boards are to face and effectively deal with the problems of decline.

II. THE POSSIBILITIES

Exploring the Possibilities

Declining enrollment has brought with it a glut of empty classrooms and under-used facilities—a new problem for educators more familiar with overcrowding. Finding uses for the excess space will require flexible and imaginative answers to the questions "What are schools for? What is the purpose of schooling?"

A schoolhouse is a building, a resource, nothing more. Remove the label "schoolhouse," with all its emotional connotations, and conversion possibilities multiply, limited only by each school system's definition of its role and responsibility to the community it serves. The school systems that find it easiest to be flexible in their utilization of excess space are those that have broadened the scope of their role. These systems are often the innovators of new concepts in schooling.

Inhibitors to Exploration

Why are so many school systems stymied in their efforts to find new uses for school facilities? Although educators will cite codes, regulations and practical constraints, the real inhibitors are restrictive attitudes, both public and professional.

Bureaucratic inflexibility

Education is a labor-intensive industry supported by an established bureaucracy. Schooling represents 8% of the gross national product; estimates are that one out of ten Americans earns his or her living from employment in an education-related field. A glance at a flow chart of the United States Office of Education demonstrates the staggering complexity of the system on the federal level alone. Ideas tend to suffocate amidst such mass. The sheer weight of the bureaucracy can impede institutional change, retard the reflective nature of schooling and desensitize it to new needs and possibilities.

Vested interests

Most bureaucracies expend much energy perpetuating themselves, and the educational bureaucracy is no exception. Administrators, teachers and other professionals in education all have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and consequently tend to resist change. Often, alternative school programs are viewed as threatening by educators (for example, a program that would recruit community resource people to offer instruction in their area of expertise would probably meet with resistance from teachers feeling threatened by encroachment on their "territory"). Resistance to change on the part of professionals in education is likely to be heightened by new job insecurities resulting from school-age population decline and subsequent school closings.

Limiting definitions

Chief among the duties of educators is that of sorting through experiences and labeling certain ones "educational." Educators are responsible for defining education. Not surprisingly, they are inclined to define it narrowly: education is what happens in an accredited school as the result of standard teaching methods. In support of their definition, they have lobbied for district and state statutes, some of which limit the use and disposal of school buildings. Fortunately, indications are that courts are interpreting local statutes liberally to allow as much flexibility as possible in the alternative use or disposal of school property.

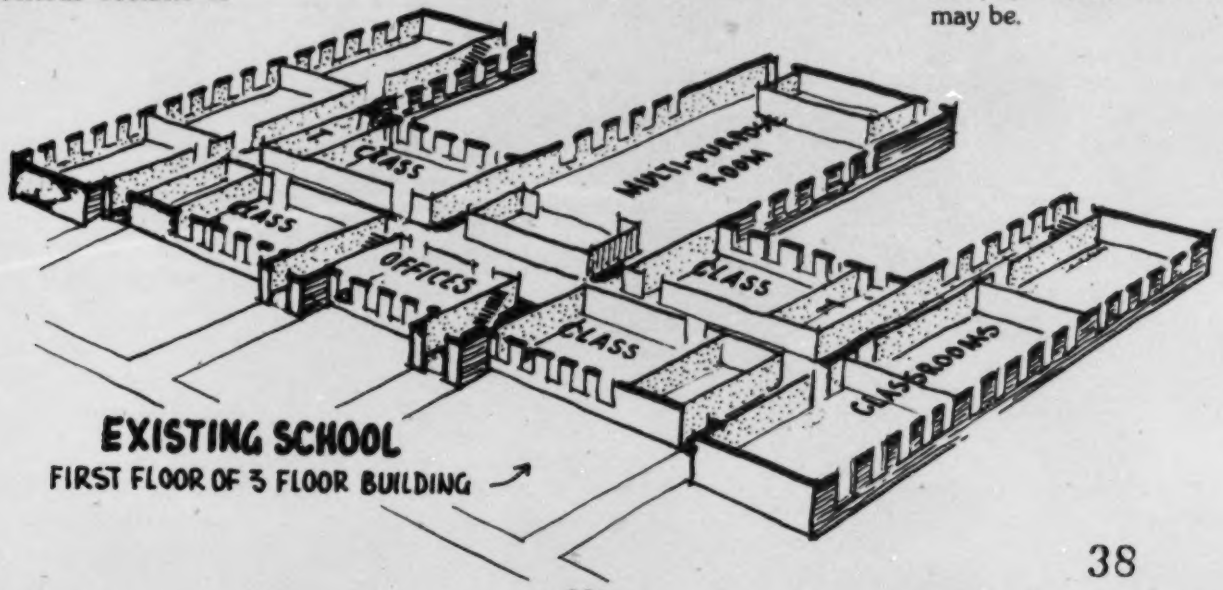
Lack of citizen involvement

The professionals' narrow definitions of education have gone unchallenged because citizens have delegated their decision-making power and responsibility to "experts." (This delegation of control has occurred not only in education, but in medicine, health, and other fields). Only lately has the wisdom of these experts to manage certain aspects

of our lives come into question. Now, when citizens question, object, or state preferences with respect to the administration of schools, they may be ignored because the mechanism of the educational institution has long operated without much lay input or attention and cannot easily sustain lay interference now. As a result, citizens all too often find themselves the unrepresented financiers of public education. Whether they elect to leave the decisions to the professionals or are ignored in their attempts to exercise control, the resulting dissociation of school from community is a serious obstacle to change.

False economy

Another deterrent to innovation is the emphasis on economic feasibility and cost effectiveness. Since 1910, school administrators have been guided by the industrial management model. Economy has often legislated in favor of bigness, consolidation and centralization; buildings are measured in costs per square foot, programs are measured in costs per student. These expenditures are important, as the citizens who fund them would no doubt agree, but they often leave administrators faced with weighing tangible costs against intangible benefits. Thus many schools have been closed in which enrollment has declined to twenty students per grade level, a situation which might prove optimal educationally. The study by Johnathon Sher and Rachael Tomkins, entitled "Economy of School District Consolidation," raises questions about the appropriateness of the industrial model for schools. Students are not the products of assembly-line construction; they are individuals whose sense of identification, responsibility and participation are adversely affected by largeness, no matter how cost-effective it may be.



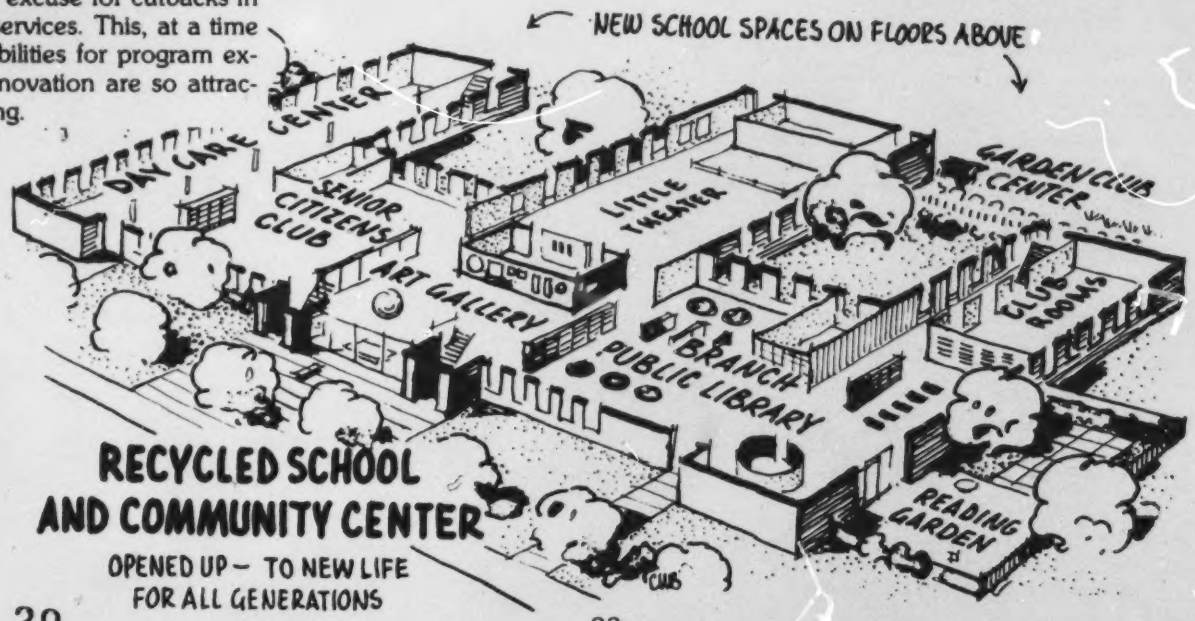
Taxpayer revolt

Taxpayer support of education can no longer be counted on to the extent that it could a decade ago. Whether this is the result of trying economic times for the individual voter, an expression of dissatisfaction with the schools and their administration, or dissatisfaction with the method in which education is funded, the number of bond issues and levies that have gone down to defeat is increasing. The rejection of levies and bond issues aggravates an already binding economic situation for schools. It has become an excuse for cutbacks in programs and services. This, at a time when the possibilities for program expansion and innovation are so attractive, is saddening.

Still, dollars alone will not help schools cope with the problems of decline. Professionals and laymen alike must recognize that old habits are obstructing their ability to develop new concepts of space utilization. The standards, rules, and regulations that govern schools must be relaxed, and schools must realize that they have been responsible for a considerable measure of their own inability to adapt to change. It is hard indeed for an institution to accept that it may be its own worst enemy.

Possibilities for the Present — Using the Space

In order to find uses for unneeded facilities, school systems do not totally have to redefine their role in society or develop new educational concepts. The suggestions provided in this section are intended to help educators and others with an interest to discover solutions within the existing educational framework.



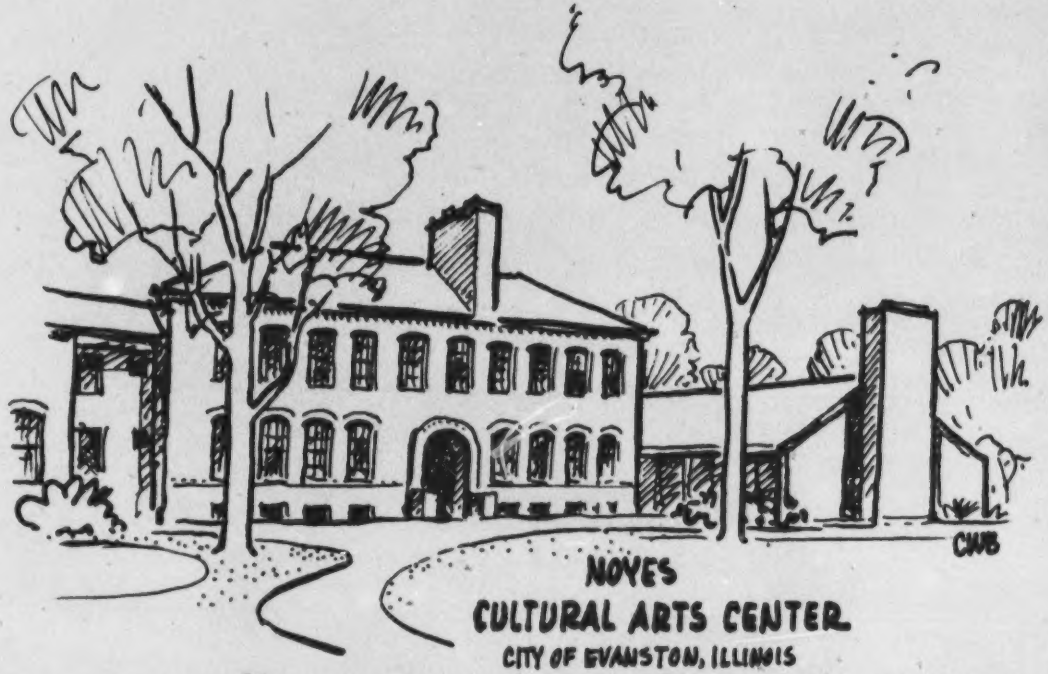
Absorption

Now that double sessions are gone, classes are smaller, and music is out of the gym, school administrators can think of using extra space to house new school activities or expand facilities for existing programs. Faculty members who have had to share one small lounge would undoubtedly be glad to turn empty classrooms into areas where they could work on projects, curriculum development, or preparation of instructional material. Space could be turned over to students for the same purpose—a place to "do their own thing." Arts, music, and recreational programs could be expanded. An extra room might house exhibits of works by the faculty and students, as well as educational exhibits brought in by outsiders. The exhibit room could be manned by volunteers, perhaps senior citizens, who would bring their own knowledge and experience to the school. Other ways a school could "absorb" unused space might be to install craft shops, music studios, art studios, housing for on-going science projects, business simulation areas, production or manufacturing set-ups, etc.

A poll of faculty, staff, and students, would probably uncover many uses for excess space, uses as exotic as installing a miniature zoo and plant room, or as pragmatic as turning the space into administrative offices and storage areas. The point is that surplus space shouldn't be wasted—it can be *used* in many imaginative ways wherever there is a need within the school.

Expanding Schooling Opportunities

Programs which have received increases in federal funding could be expanded at the local level, thereby putting available space to use. Fulfilling the requirements of Public Law 94-142 "Education for All Handicapped Children," and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, will mean that school systems will have to house special education in regular school buildings instead of separate schools. In some cases, schools may have to assume the responsibility for handicap-



ped children who have received all previous education from other social agencies.

Adult education programs have also received increases in federal funding. These programs vary greatly in content and space needs, from the external high school diploma program of Syracuse, New York, now being copied in many other states, to California's program to assist immigrants in learning skills essential to daily living, such as how to find a doctor, understand directions, or interpret the law. Programs like these demonstrate that adult education does not have to be limited to basic after-school courses in recreation, crafts and job retraining.

Vocational education and career education programs could also be expanded at the local level. Left-over facilities could be turned into specialized schools offering training in anything from the performing arts to hotel management.

Several school districts have begun offering parents the option of placing their children in an alternative school within the regular school system. Educators hope that this will encourage students to stay in the public schools. Alternative school programs can offer a wide range of classroom situations, from progressive to back-to-basics. Minneapolis has three separate elementary schools, each offering a different style of education, housed in one facility. The facility is new, but existing structures could be used as well, with some modifications.

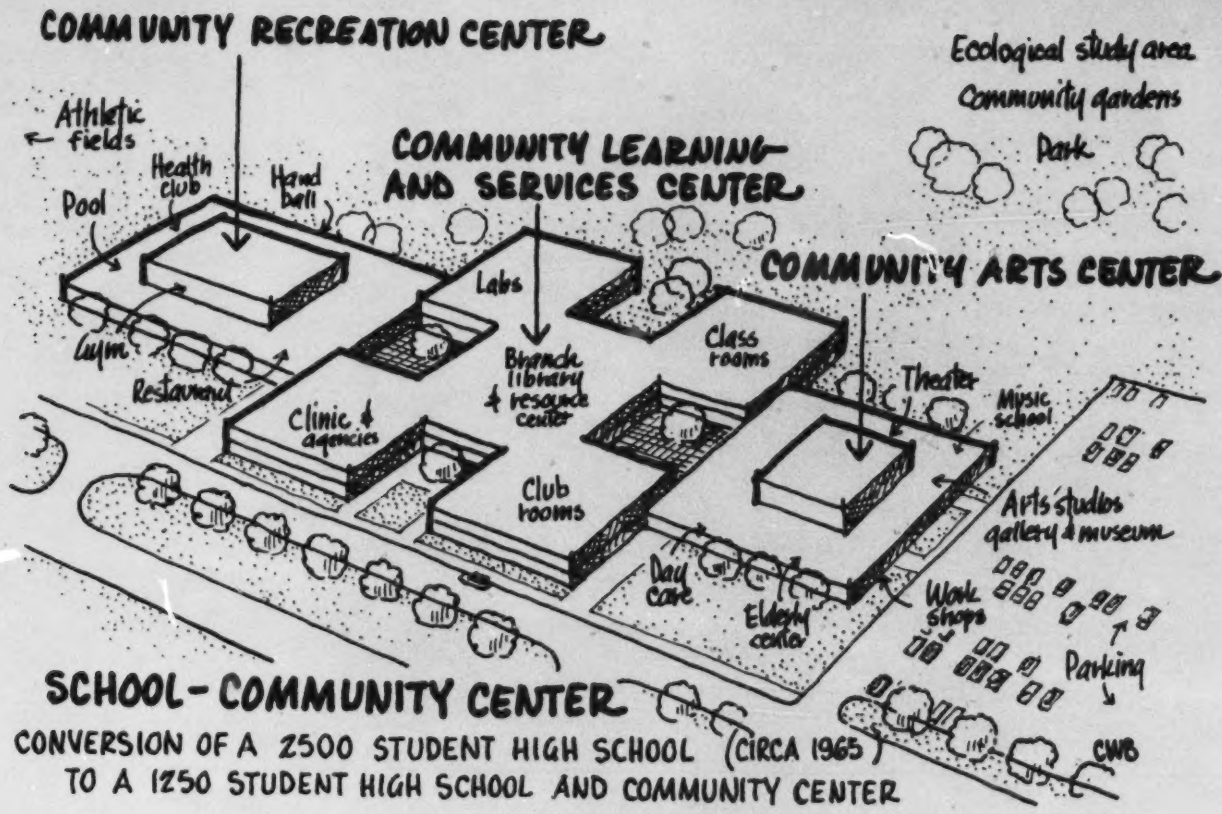
Year-round schooling is an option which school districts with unevenly distributed school-age populations might explore. Rather than building schools to keep up with the overcrowding in one part of the district while space is underused in another, districts with this problem could distribute students evenly among the available facilities throughout the school year. This would permit optimal use of the facilities at minimum cost.

Joint-Venturing and Community Service Centers

Joint-venturing—the sharing of space, administrative personnel, and dollars by a school and one or more of the agencies of municipal government, or a private enterprise—is an imaginative method of coping with both excess space and fiscal reality. The John F. Kennedy School and Community Center in Atlanta, the Whitmer Human Resources Center in Pontiac, Michigan and the New North Community School in Springfield, Mass. are fine examples of joint-venturing. Housed in one facility are a variety of social services and recreational programs as well as a school. (Refer to: *Community Schools and Interagency Programs*, by J. Ringers, for further information on joint-venturing.)

The idea of using a schoolhouse as a community service center is either very new or very familiar, depending on one's age and memory. Schools have traditionally been centers of community activity. Community service centers can continue the tradition by offering citizens a method of identifying and participating in their community. A center could be set up in the extra rooms of an existing school or in an empty school building. Its uses are as many and varied as the community's needs. It could be a place where the total citizenry learn skills, exchange information, or socialize. It could also provide government services.

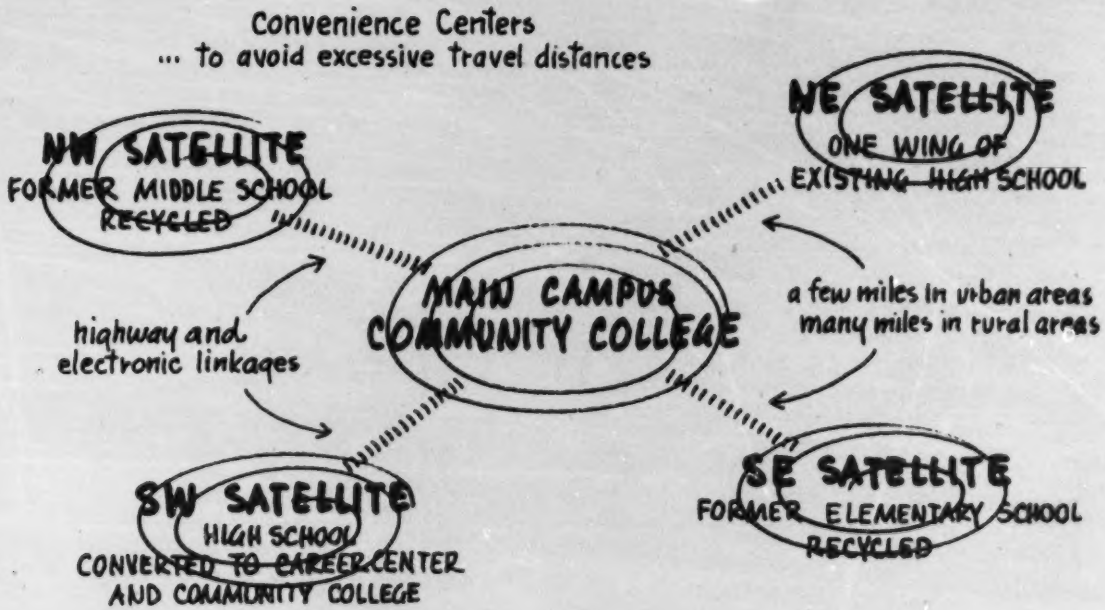
Additional community services might locate in unused school space, either as part of a community service center, joint-venturing arrangement, or as independent programs. For example, almost every area needs more early childhood and extended daycare facilities. The elderly and the disadvantaged could profit from a community arts and crafts center where skills could be taught, articles made, and the resulting products sold. Occupational development and transcript evaluation centers, designed to assess and accredit individuals for demonstrated skills,



would be useful to many communities. Human resource centers offering diagnostic and training programs, legal counseling clinics, shelter workshops that provide living and working space for people on public works projects, learning exchange centers where laymen tutor each other, a branch library or paperback lending and reading room, meeting space for local organizations and clubs—all are possibilities for utilizing school space in ways beneficial to the community. The list goes on and on, limited only by imagination and need.

Community College Satellites

As community colleges grow in importance, accessible neighborhood satellites are required to provide the most popular programs at convenient locations. These programs can occur in portions of public school buildings, sharing certain facilities.



COMMUNITY COLLEGE SATELLITES

UTILIZING SURPLUS SCHOOL SPACE

47

48

Sale and Leasing

A school building can be sold or leased to private enterprises or public service agencies. Sometimes buildings can be sold at a profit, sometimes not. Private development concerns may buy them for housing, rest homes, shopping areas, or industrial manufacturing facilities. Private schools have purchased closed public school buildings. The public service sector has turned school buildings into mental health clinics, art centers, senior citizen centers, day care facilities, and offices for municipal government. The following illustrations exemplify conversion of excess school space to private use.

APARTMENTS AND SHOPS

REMODELED 1915 DEWITT HIGH SCHOOL - ITHACA, NEW YORK

SEDCO, INC.
CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

RECYCLED 1890's CUMBERLAND SCHOOL - DOWNTOWN DALLAS, TEXAS

"GRISWOLD'S OLD SCHOOL HOUSE"
SHOPPING CENTER
RECYCLED 1920s HIGH SCHOOL - CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

51

AMERICAN NUCLEAR SOCIETY
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
RENOVATED OAK SCHOOL - LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS

52

Mothballing

Some communities have simply decided to board-up unused schools and hold onto them until the space is needed again (and current birthrate projections indicate that many schools may be needed again). Vandalism and the effects of decay make this the least desirable solution to the problem of excess space. Curriculum innovations and program changes make it even less likely that a reopened building will suit future educational needs.

Demolition

Communities that have more schools than they can find uses for and a limited supply of land may decide to tear down the unneeded structures. Or, they may find some buildings are unlikely candidates for improvement in energy use; therefore demolition is appropriate. Sometimes the value of a building is less than the value of the land; sound economics can favor demolition of the former and sale of the latter. While taxpayers may be appalled at the apparent wastefulness of demolishing a schoolhouse, particularly if the structure is fairly new, the community may be able to make better use of the resulting space, perhaps as a park, or as housing, office or shopping areas.

A Word About School Closings

In ever increasing numbers, school boards are brushing up on public relations techniques designed to convince angry citizens of the necessity for school closings. Too often, an administrator will decide to close a school without consulting the community it serves. This is unfortunate because school closings, emotional as they are, offer a real opportunity for increasing communication between different sectors of the community. The following examples illustrate successful results of community interaction:

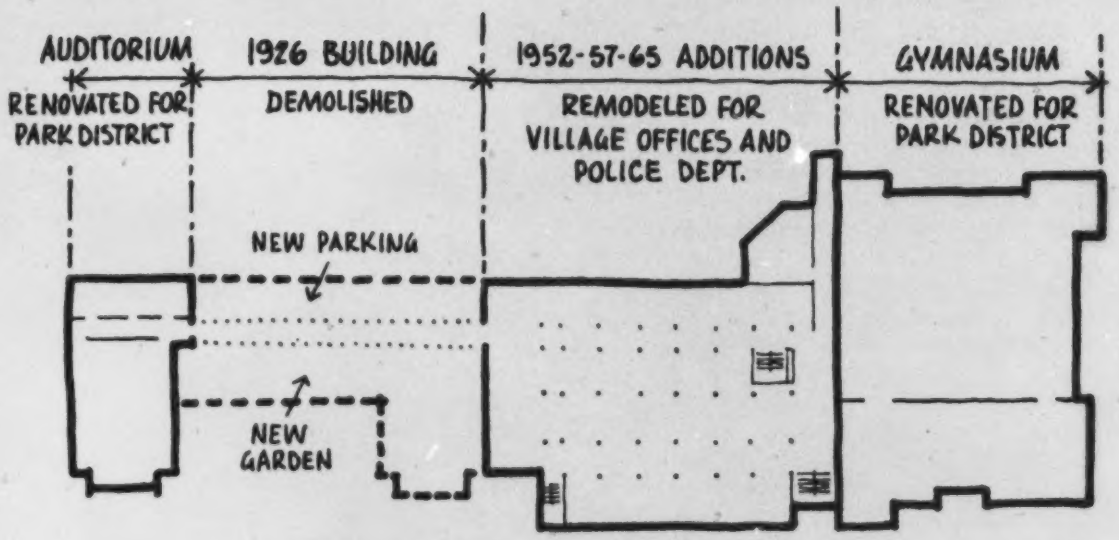
* Surplus school space in Winnetka, Illinois caused that board of education to look elsewhere for utilization. They found multiple needs, and right in their own backyard. Other community agencies (such as the park district, the library board, the senior citizens group, the village board) required room for expansion, and consequently, suites of unused school space will be leased to them.

* A small elementary school in Kanawha County, West Virginia, previously closed because of the integration plan, is now

functioning as a community service center offering day programs for senior citizens. Its most important contribution, however, has been to give community members the opportunity to articulate their needs and to become involved in the processes of their local government.

* A group of artists rent the old McGuffy school building in Charlottesville, Virginia for one dollar a year. In return, the building—converted into studios and exhibit space—is open to school classes and to the community.

Educators should be anxious to involve the lay public in their decisions for another reason—there is a moral issue inherent in school closings. The total citizenry has endowed the school system with the responsibility for educating the young and has supplied it with funds to build and run school facilities. School boards and administrators are trustees of community property. They cannot, in all fairness, dispose of a building without considering the wishes of the building's real owners.



CONVERSION OF A HIGH SCHOOL INTO A
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
PALATINE, ILLINOIS

55

56

Possibilities for the Future

The preceding section was devoted to finding ways of using school space that do not conflict, or conflict very little, with our current definition of "normal" education. Although these solutions will suffice for awhile, we must ultimately come to terms with a future which will in all probability oblige us to reshape our institutions and re-examine our notions about schooling.

"Normal" education has been traditionally defined as the transmission of a standard range of skills to children from the ages of 5 through 18, disseminated in facilities designed exclusively for that purpose, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The last change of any significance in the formula was the requirement that schooling be mandatory until age 16. Now, the system which responded successfully to growth is hard-pressed to cope with decline. The "empty box" has become a triggering device for crisis.

Most of the literature dealing with decline-associated problems has been written by specialized groups within education which are attempting to find solutions using the current definition of education and conventional policy and management procedures. But there are others, whose work bears such titles as: *Change in Schools through Community Involvement and Shared Decision Making; Changing Values Challenge the Schools; or Public Schools and the Challenge of Cultural Pluralism.* These authors are exploring the possibilities for alternative definitions of "normal" education.

Alternative Forms of Schooling

We can already point to areas where attempts are being made to develop new forms of schooling that will respond to the challenges of our changing society. Not least among them are efforts toward making small schools efficient. Paradoxically, many schools close because they are no longer cost-effective just when student body size and teacher/pupil ratios have reached levels most conducive to learning. While efficient small schools may not sound like an innovative concept, some of the methods used to obtain that efficiency are. Small schools may call upon laymen to teach. They may go outside the classrooms to use community facilities as arenas for learning. The more small schools turn to the larger community for their resources, the more they embody the broader aims of community education and achieve real integration between the community and the school.

Community education may get a boost from another direction. Our dwindling resources are prompting some planners to recommend that communities abandon the construction of single-purpose buildings such as schools and consider erecting adaptable structures that could serve a variety of purposes. This type of building would necessarily alter the relationship between the school and the community. Instead of the schools providing space for community service, the community would assign space to the school. Multiple-use facilities would encourage the introduction of broader concepts of education.

The use of school facilities to house alternative public school programs has been discussed in the preceding section; multiple-use facilities and energy conservation might encourage the spread of alternative mini-schools sharing space in the same facility. As a further development, parents might be able to select, via a voucher system, which educational program receives the tax dollars allocated to their children's education. Such a system would introduce competition into the public schools, give parents a greater voice in their children's education and expand the taxpayer's relationship to schools.

As the push for pluralism in education grows, we may see more schools with bilingual and bi-cultural curricula.

Schools already exist whose curriculum is designed to balance prevailing social behavior. These schools stress cooperation rather than competitiveness, mutual tolerance and interdependence, multiculturalism, the use of the senses as well as the reason, integration rather than specialization in the learning process, and equality in interactions among students, teachers and administrators.

New educational programs that emphasize individualized instruction relate to the availability of some extra school space. Individualized programs require more space per pupil, but with space available, the economics can be favorable. In contrast to the traditional school (with a teacher in every classroom, and with most spaces scheduled intensively), a program based on individual instruction would provide more space for each student, along with the benefits of self-paced, student-centered learning.

Retraining people for mid-life career changes may become an important function of education in the future, since there is evidence that the number of people changing careers in their forties, fifties and sixties is increasing. Ideas about the ages during which people should be schooled may become more flexible. While a forty-two year old woman is being retrained, a fifteen year old boy may be attending school part-time or may "stop-out" to work for awhile. (This assumes that there will be work enough to go around, an assumption that many theorists are challenging.)

Proponents of the Life-Long Learning movement are working for recognition of each individual's capacity and need to learn throughout life. Day care centers staffed by senior citizens are proving to be popular, successful learning experiences for young and old. Plans are underway to place senior citizens in high school classes in the hope that shared experiences will increase understanding between the generations. Add to these experiments the growth of adult education and the potential for mid-life career change training, and it is easy to envision a future in which students of all ages will study together, their grade levels determined by their knowledge and capabilities and not by their age.

While most education has always occurred outside the classroom, television, computers, and other technologies are slowly taking over many of the functions that used to belong exclusively to the schools. It is possible that for some people, schooling will eventually occur in the telecommunications center of the home. Home-centered learning would be of particular help to rural populations. The potential for home-centered learning may encourage population migrations from urban to rural areas.

More and more profit-making enterprises are educating their workers, often because schools have not provided the necessary training. Usually this kind of education takes the form of apprenticeships or training programs. Unions, too, are pushing for increased educational benefits for their members. Some training programs are job specific, others are more generalized, and some even offer degrees. It is conceivable that industries may eventually rival high schools and colleges as educational institutions.

All this diversity will require a degree of organization. Legislators should begin to make provisions for regional education information centers, which could provide citizens with information about various kinds of schooling available in their area. These centers could also provide data on overused, underused and usable facilities, as well as population distribution, and need areas.

Planning for construction of school facilities should no longer take place purely on a local level; state, regional, and national planning will be needed to keep us from duplicating efforts and wasting resources.

Making the Change

We have touched on only some of the possibilities for education. There is no doubt that new forms of schooling will evolve from among the wealth of present-day experiments. Thomas Kuhn's theories on paradigm shifts, from the book, *Theory of Scientific Revolutions*, may apply analogously to the process of change that schools are presently undergoing. Kuhn explains that paradigm shifts contain the following steps:

> A Discovery or Theory emerges in the mind of one or a few who learn to see the world differently.
>
> There is persistent failure to solve a noteworthy puzzle which gives rise to a crisis.
>
> Competing paradigms develop and there is disagreement about what problems need to be solved.
>
> New paradigms are born from old ones, using the same vocabulary and apparatus. Their supporters claim that the new paradigms will solve the problems which were incurred by the old paradigms, and which led to the crisis. Opponents persist in the belief that the old paradigms can solve all problems. They do not convert but eventually die off. A new generation grows up familiar with the new theories.
>
> The specialized community [in this case the educators] has the authority to choose between competing paradigms.

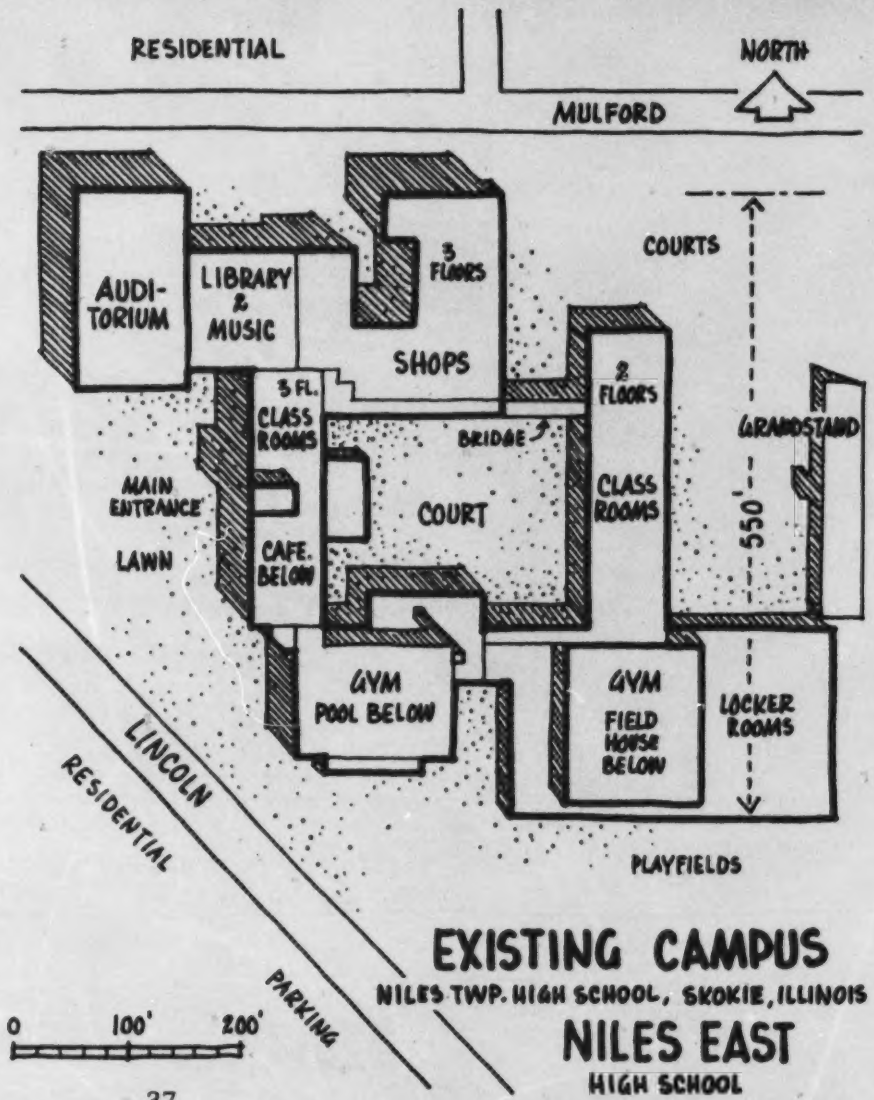
Education today gives every indication of entering into a shift state. Those who would like to hasten the shift must recognize their responsibility towards informed community action and cooperation. They can begin by implementing such objectives as the following: to identify the clientele that schools serve and determine the needs of that clientele; to analyze people's expectations toward schools, determining if they are realistic; to lobby for changes in structures, procedures and attitudes that restrict education to its present definition; to lobby for equity in human and physical resources that will benefit all members of a community; to learn to recognize those who are in power positions; to learn to exercise rights and powers to persuade, to pressure and to act constructively with neighbors; to become familiar with the regulations governing educational institutions and apply the procedures for changing regulations.

Those who would explore new definitions of education must see to it that their strategies remain flexible enough to accept alternative concepts. Their theories must balance the probable future with the future they would like to see.

Schools are socially imitative institutions; as society changes schools will also change. Our hope is to anticipate those changes. Our responsibility is to begin to provide innovative educational alternatives that fulfill the changing needs of the community.

III. GRAPHIC DISPLAY (NILES EAST HIGH SCHOOL)

The following six sketches illustrate the proposed conversion of Niles East High School in Skokie, Illinois to create 125 apartments, a community art center, and a community recreation center.

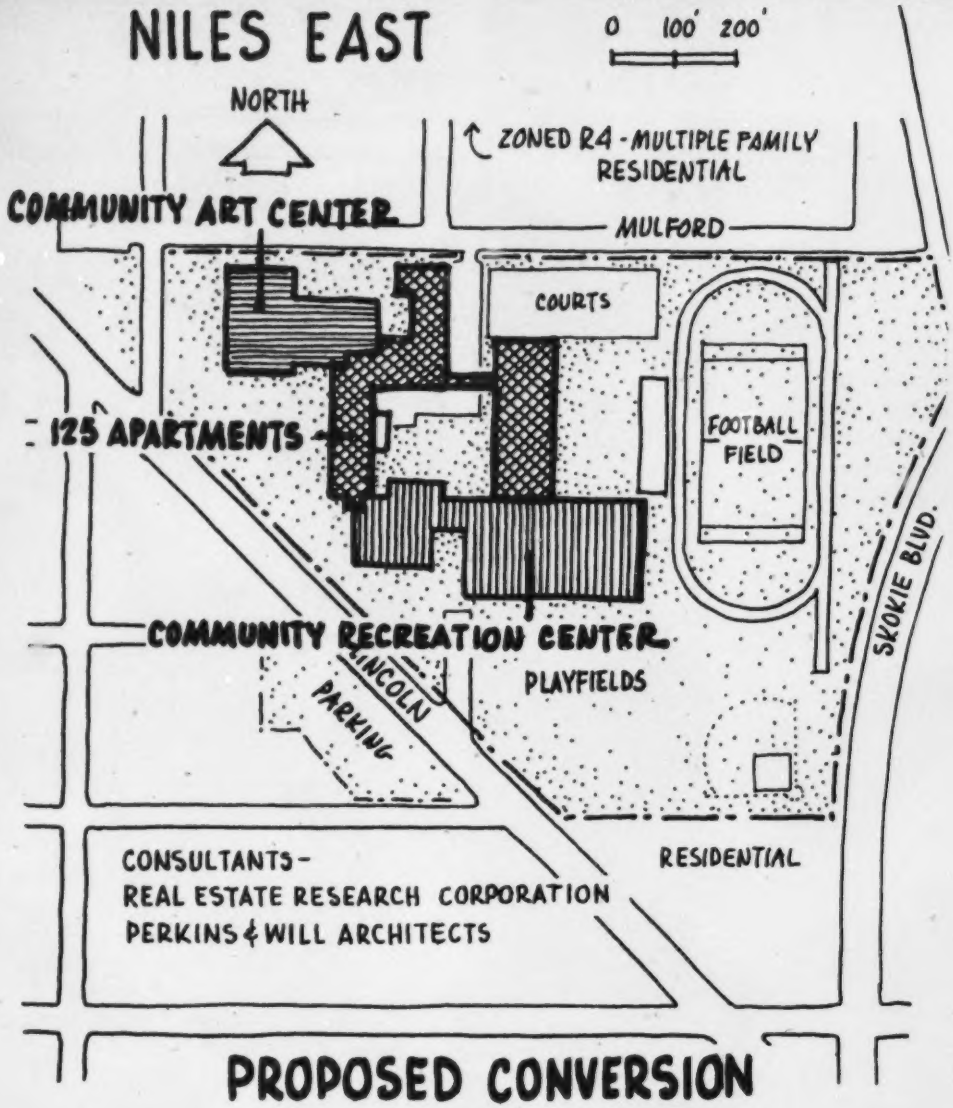


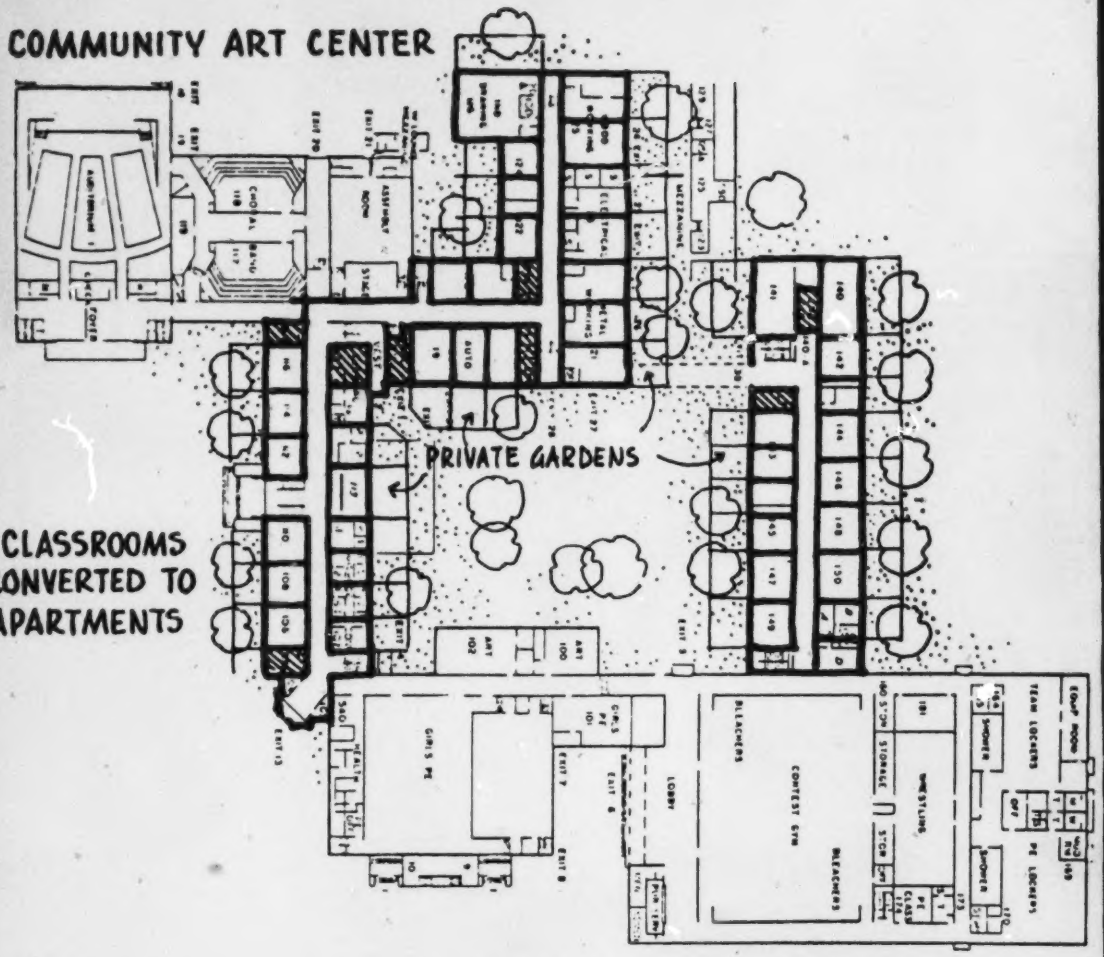
EXISTING CAMPUS

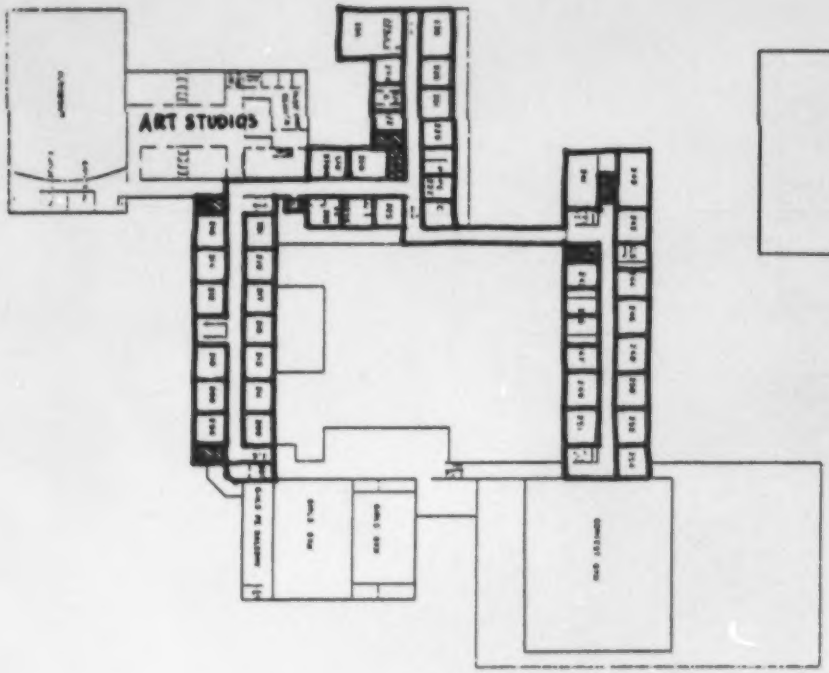
NILES TWP. HIGH SCHOOL, SKOKIE, ILLINOIS

NILES EAST

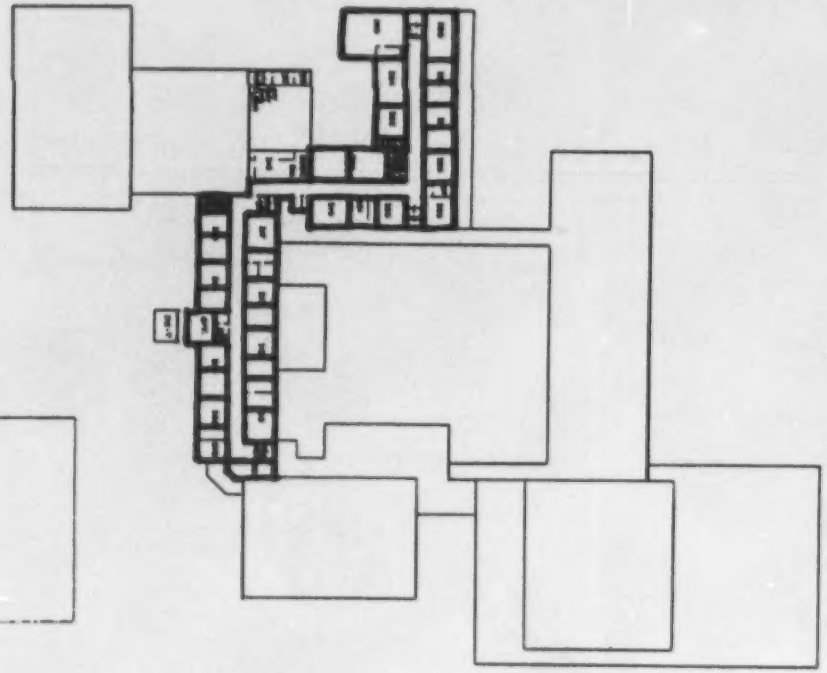
HIGH SCHOOL


NILES EAST
0 100' 200'
NORTH
ZONED R4 - MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
COMMUNITY ART CENTER
MULFORD
COURTS
FOOTBALL FIELD
125 APARTMENTS
COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER
PLAYFIELDS
LINCOLN PARKING
SKOKIE BLVD.
CONSULTANTS -
REAL ESTATE RESEARCH CORPORATION
PERKINS & WILL ARCHITECTS
RESIDENTIAL
PROPOSED CONVERSION


COMMUNITY ART CENTER
PRIVATE GARDENS
CLASSROOMS CONVERTED TO APARTMENTS
COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER
FIRST FLOOR
45 APARTMENTS



SECOND FLOOR 46 APARTMENTS

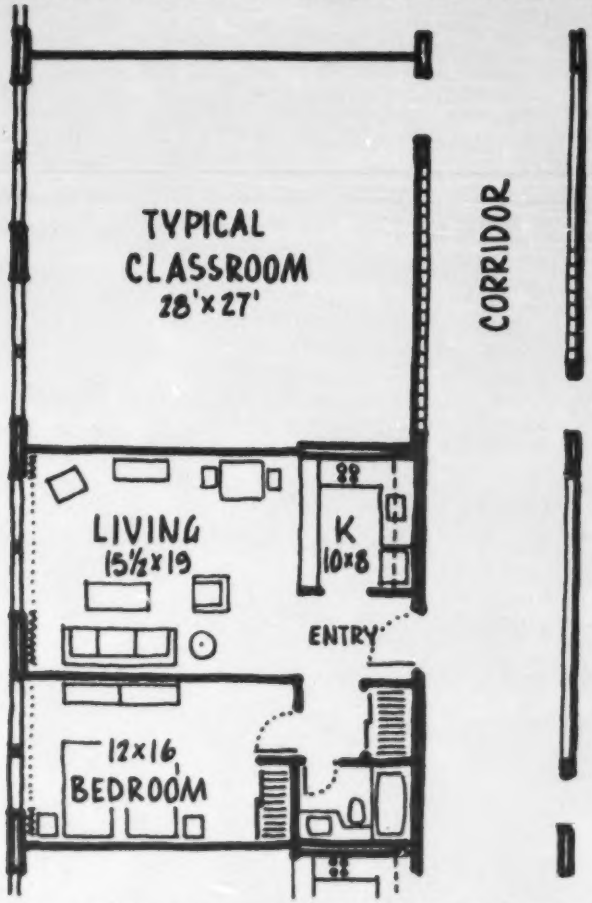


THIRD FLOOR 34 APARTMENTS

68

69

A TYPICAL CLASSROOM IS 756 SQUARE FEET,
AN IDEAL SIZE FOR A ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT



TYPICAL ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT

. . . . consider the possibilities.

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The Council of Educational Facility Planners, International has established the Center for Community Education Facility Planning as a special project. Through workshops, development of a resource center, and technical assistance, the Center will assist local organizations, community groups, and others in the planning of facilities which meet community needs. Topics of special interest to the Center include how to plan, how to incorporate community education in new building construction, and how to convert excess school space into community centers. For further information on planning facilities for community education, call or write:

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